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SUBJECT: "The Voice of Thy Brother's Blood Crieth Unto Me"

Ref: A) Guangzhou 11470, B) Guangzhou 10336,

-- C) Guangzhou 6981, D) Guangzhou 4104,

-- E) Guangzhou 3991 and previous (all notal)

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¶1. (SBU) Summary: Senseless killing matters deeply to Chinese -- particularly when involving excessive governmental power (as in the "control" of public unrest). That's why governments, including those in south China, work assiduously to control and suppress public outcry, including that emanating from abroad, over, for example, the authorities' deadly riot suppression actions at Dongzhou. Such government killings also reinforce the notion that rapid economic development "eats people" -- to use the words of Lu Xun, China's most prominent modern author. Any fundamental change to this state of affairs has to ultimately come through the assertion of will by the Chinese citizenry. U.S. public diplomacy programs on the rule of law and democratic institution-building inject important concepts about legitimate dispute resolution but they could and should be complemented by programs that tap into and reinforce the core values and the basic decency of the Chinese citizenry, including their appreciation of American humanity and humanities. Such programs can help rapid economic development in south China to occur without "eating people." End Summary.

Dwelling in the South of Nod

¶2. (SBU) Killing people is not only wrong, but it is also embarrassing. When Chinese officials or even academics are put into a position of having to defend the governmental killing of protestors at some scene of civil unrest (and septel deals with reports of possibly another incident), they clam up, hem and haw, or avoid meetings that inevitably have to touch on the subject (refs B and C). The intentional governmental killing of people differs from the killing of people that occurs through government non-feasance (such as in coal mine disasters and other accidents where the failure of regulation is often a contributing cause). So while discussion, including with U.S. Consulate personnel, is permissible about the accidental deaths of people deriving in part from some

faulty governmental action or non-action, once there is some official pronouncement in the aftermath of killings to suppress civil disorder no further discussion is permissible, as was the case in the fatal handling of the Dongzhou protestors. This distinction is also very clear in how the central authorities have treated the topics; they have been forthcoming about the number of both major industrial accidents and civil unrest incidents, but while figures for the numbers of the deaths incurred in the former are available while the numbers of deaths in the latter are not. Civil unrest incidents are also those that can call into the question the political viability of very highest leaders in the Province (ref E).

"Diary of a Madman"

¶3. (SBU) This refusal by Guangdong provincial or local authorities to further address instances of civil unrest involving killing translates also to the suppression of foreign government and media commentary as well as to the sharp curtailing or banning of domestic commentators. The effect domestically has not been, however, necessarily ideal from the standpoint of the authorities. To be sure, there are undoubtedly those who believe -- as the government statement asserts -- that the Dongzhou rioters, for example, were a hoodlum mob bent on wanton destruction of energy facilities built for the greater good of all Guangdong citizens. This might even have a high degree of accuracy, but once government killings come into play the far stronger impression is that rapid, relentless, government-planned and -led economic growth is responsible, thus reinforcing the arguments of those calling for less globalization by China and greater equality and fairness as determined by Communist Party dictate even at the expense

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of slowing down market opening and reform.

¶4. (SBU) A large number of academics and journalists, not to mention many young business executives, do not want to turn back the clock to a more socialist, party-led model of equality, but feel that the government's overweening preoccupation with rapid economic growth needs to have a humanitarian component to offset the notion that such development "eats people" -- to use the words of Lu Xun, China's most prominent modern era writer (in his "Diary of a Madman" short story in which the supposedly mentally deranged narrator has looked at the whole of Chinese history and found its grandeur and power to be founded on the eating of people). In fact, to this end there is a conscious attempt led in part by Guangzhou's most progressive and highly influential magazine, the "Nanfengchuang" (the "South Wind Window"), to revive the spirit of the New Culture Movement of the 1920s of which Lu was a key figure along with China's most prominent liberal, Hu Shi (a colleague and friend of the American educator and philosopher John Dewey) and Chinese Communist Party co-founder Chen Duxiu, then a leading Beijing University professor and an advocate of joining science and democracy to advance China (ref D).

Reinterpreting "Harmonious Society"

¶5. (SBU) These sort of ideas have considerable resonance in an area in which Sun Yatsen remains a major local hero. Lu Xun, for his part, lived for a time in Guangzhou, and not only is there a statue of him, but also the Chen Family Shrine, one of Guangzhou's most popular and famous tourist sites, features a garden full of sculptures depicting scenes from Lu's "The Autobiography of Ah Q" and "Kong Yi Ji." We have also been struck about how many university students in this area are familiar with the stories, even if, in this audio-visual media world, they may not actually have read the stories.

¶6. (SBU) It is this considerable resonance that gives

impetus to attempts here by progressive academics and journalists to reinterpret the Communist leadership's own attempt to imbue its policies with a "humane" element with slogans such as "taking people as the base" ("yiren weiben"). In this vein, a recent "Nanfengchuang" editorial asserts that in the now ubiquitous slogan of building a "harmonious society" ("hexie shehui"), the "he" character is derived from components meaning "barley" and "mouth" and thus implies that everybody has the right to eat (or "livelihood") while the "xie" character is derived from components meaning "speech" and "all" and thus implies that everybody has the right to speak freely. Therefore, the editorial argues, "harmonious society" can only be based on equitable economic development coupled with a genuine democracy based on equal rights -- something of an echo of Communist Party co-founder Chen Duxiu's formula of science and democracy leading China out of its predicament in the 1920s.

A Role for U.S. Public Diplomacy

¶ 7. (SBU) In this climate of ideas, there is a role for U.S. public diplomacy even though our interlocutors and audiences are not able to talk directly and freely about the civil unrest incidents and killings themselves. Indirectly, however, our public diplomacy programs on the rule of law and democratic-institution building deal with this issue and have drawn in large numbers of people. In addition to using speakers traveling from the United States or already on the ground in China, for example, Fulbrighter Scholars, Consulate Guangzhou's own self-generated and self-manned "legal series" on law topics and "town hall series" (conducted in the style of an American town hall meeting) on social, political, and economic topics enjoy great popularity, with local universities coming to us to hold such series on their campuses. We anticipate that our "Bill of Rights" countdown series in which Consulate speakers will deal with each of the first ten amendments of the Constitution in the weeks leading up to our Independence Day celebration will play to similarly

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enthusiastic audiences.

¶ 8. (SBU) We should not, however, underestimate the audience for American culture and humanities. A discussion series on American movies (brilliantly revived by our colleagues in Consulate Shanghai and unabashedly emulated by us) revealed just how closely Guangzhou audiences connected with the basic humanity and decency of Americans as depicted cinematically. While a first glance at audiences at Consulate Guangzhou's English pedagogy series might suggest that the primary interest is improving linguistic skills, a closer examination reveals that there is a very large audience for American literature and thought. American literature specialist Ernesto Suarez, our Fulbright Scholar at Guangzhou's Zhongshan University, is in demand not only at Zhongshan but also at other institutions every weekend throughout China. Recently, the Shantou University English Language Department approached the Consulate about strengthening the American literature component of its program in line with the desire of students to learn not merely the language but also the values of the American people speaking that language. Moreover, the huge amount of positive media attention attending the use of the Ambassador's Cultural Preservation Fund for a museum in Hepu reflected the great appreciation by many Chinese of American respect and understanding for the ancient Middle Kingdom's legacy (ref A).

Concluding Comment

¶ 9. (SBU) The March 20 edition of the English language "China Daily" reported the majority of Chinese people liked Americans, with 63 percent of those polled deriving these views from mass media, 21 percent through movies, and 4

percent through direct contact with Americans. These numbers are probably higher in Guangdong, given the larger number of opportunities to see and interact with Americans in a relatively more open part of China. To be sure, the degree of liking of Americans is related to the sheer success of the United States, with its technological and economic prowess, but it is also the case that there is a strong appreciation for our moral and humane values of tolerance, openness, and diversity. For their part, the Chinese have had a long and strong humanist tradition that greatly values principles and human life. There would seem to be substantial room for a strengthening of the humanity and humanities ties that can bind, and, with it, the reinforcement of a value system in China that will not tolerate the "eating of people" in pursuit of economic development.

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